

## OBITUARY

### W. H. LOARING

William Henry Loaring, a foundation member of the Club in 1924, and later elected an Honorary Life Member, died at the Repatriation General Hospital, Hollywood on February 25, 1968. He was born at Coolgardie on January 24, 1898, son of the late A. C. R. Loaring, active in eastern goldfields affairs between 1896 and 1902, and who in 1902 established a well-known orchard, "Lawnbrook" at Bickley, then known as Heidelberg. In the same year Mr Loaring, in partnership with Mr Neil McLeod, also purchased from Mr Richard Gale "Wallcliffe," the old Bussell property on the Margaret River, but the homestead block was sold back to the Bussell family in 1910 (for biography of A. C. R. Loaring see *The Cyclopaedia of Western Australia*, 1912, vol. 2, pp. 152-153).



W. H. Loaring, 1925.

Will Loaring spent his early youth alternately at "Wallcliffe" and "Lawnbrook," attending school both at Margaret River and at Carmel (near Bickley). The family retained lands at Margaret River after "Wallcliffe" itself was sold and Will and his family often resided there. For most of his life, however, he assisted his father in operating the citrus orchard at "Lawnbrook," a show place in the district.

On his 18th birthday he enlisted in the A.I.F. and served in France. He was wounded in action and repatriated to Australia in 1917. In 1925 he married Marie Schmidt, of "Sunset," Lower Chittering, whose brother Eric, of "Marbling," Lower Chittering, married Will's sister Barbara. In the same year he acquired a 20 acre tract of virgin land at Bickley and started an orchard of his own, as well as operating at "Lawnbrook." His own property, a considerable part of which was left as a nature reserve, he called "Wood St. Mars," a name inspired by a volume of short animal stories by F. St. Mars. The name puzzled some of his correspondents, and soon after he was married he received a letter

addressed, "Wood Street, Mars." On the envelope a helpful postal official had crossed out the word "Mars" and written, "Try Bickley." Anticipating continued difficulties of this kind, Will remarked whimsically to his wife, "I think we have made a mistake. We should have called it "St. Mars Wood."

All his life Will was passionately devoted to natural history, not in an extrovert way with, as is customary, publishing his observations in natural history journals, but as a private, personally satisfying activity. An earnest, conscientious man, he recorded in great detail his observations in a long series of diaries which began in 1915, just before he went to the War, and recommenced in a new format on July 1, 1918, under the title of "Nature Records." However he was no retiring, selfish recorder. Though he rarely published much under his own name, he generously provided his data to many other publishing naturalists. Perhaps the most notable of these contributions were those he provided Mr Angus Robinson for his memoir on the life history of the Western Magpie (*Emu*, 56 (4), 1956; 233), and mention may also be made of his notes on the earlier occurrence of the Quokka at Margaret River and Bickley (given to Mr S. R. White) and the numerous items from him published in the *Birds of Western Australia* (Serventy and Whittell).

He was encouraged and guided initially by the late W. B. Alexander, then in charge of the zoological collections at the Western Australian Museum, and for him Will had always a great respect and admiration. Alexander visited "Lawnbrook" several times, travelling by the old "Zig-zag" railway to Kalamunda; in Alexander's field notes three such trips are mentioned for 1919. An exhibit of the Red-winged Wren from Bickley, collected on one of these occasions and mounted by Otto Liplert, was for long on public display at the bird gallery of the Museum. With Will's passing there now remain only two naturalists in this State who had local field experience with Alexander—Ian Edgar and J. B. Higham.

In 1923 Will succeeded Bruce W. Leake as State Secretary of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union and the writer of this notice followed Will in the post in 1926.

Distance from the metropolitan area and the inconveniences of transport thither were the main factors which prevented Will in the earlier years from too frequent contact with Perth naturalists. The Zig-zag railway (suspended in 1949) involved a journey of two hours each way between Bickley and Perth and it was not until the early 1930's that a regular bus service started operations, and then only from Kalamunda. However, interstate naturalists called on him and during the 1927 interstate congress of the R.A.O.U. Mr Edwin Ashby, of Adelaide, visited Bickley and made observations there. In later years, with car travel more frequent, many of us enjoyed the company of Will at Bickley and elsewhere. He was a delightful bush companion and I recall with pleasure a joint camp we had together at the Moor River gorge (*W. Aust. Nat.*, 3, 1952: 107) and at the mouth of the Moore River. As he aged Will gradually lost a good deal of his hearing and in his walks around "Wood St. Mars" his devoted wife acted as his ears in interpreting the bird notes. Later still a stroke incapacitated him but he retained consolation in the large natural history library he had built up.

His note-books of a life-time's detailed observation in his beloved Bickley countryside, written up meticulously in his neat characteristic hand, as by a perfectionist, will be preserved in the Battye Library of the State Library.

D.L.S.